

CASA of Cochise County

News & Views



Abby Dodge – CASA Coordinator ~ Lissete Borbon – Support Staff ~ Phone: 432-7521 Fax: 432-7247

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Abby Dodge

CASA of Cochise County celebrated its 27th anniversary on September 25, 2016. This program would not be successful without all of you. I hope that we were able to show you how much we appreciate you at our annual recognition dinner. Those of you that weren't able to attend, you were missed. It was a great event!

I'm excited to announce that we have several new advocates working through the application and training process. Word-of-mouth continues to be our most successful recruitment method. Those of you who are telling others about CASA, thank you! With new advocates comes the need for mentors.

Coordinator's Comments

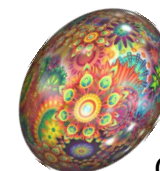
If you are already a mentor, or have been one in the past, then be prepared – I will be reaching out to see if you have time for another mentee. If you are interested in becoming one, please let me know! Matching new advocates up with an experienced advocate helps strengthen the support that new advocates receive when they are getting started.

At the beginning of October, I will be sending out emails to each of you letting you know where you stand with the annual 12-hour training requirement. Because we recently switched over to CASAaz, you are now responsible for entering your own training hours for approval. However, since we didn't switch until August, the hours portrayed in the system are not complete. When I send out your total training hours, I will include instructions of how to make CASAaz portray accurate training hours for this year.

We are overdue for another Court Report Writing training, so we will be providing that training on Wednesday, October 12th from 1-4 PM. The training will occur at the Regional Service Center conference room in Sierra Vista (across the breezeway from the Juvenile Probation Office). In the past, the Court Report writing training was a 6-hour training. However,

I realize that not everyone has that much free time. I have condensed the training down to 3 hours; hopefully that makes it easier on everyone's schedules. Since this will be the first offering of the condensed class, I welcome feedback and suggestions on how to improve. If you haven't attended a Court Report Writing class, please try to attend. Even if you have attended one in the past, this will be a great refresher. Please RSVP to me by Monday, October 10th. I will also be sending out an email with this information. We hope to see you there!

Thank you all for everything that you do to make this program successful!



Can you find the Easter Egg in this issue?

(An Easter Egg is an unsuspected surprise of the digital world.)



CASA of the Year!

2016

Krista Ochs



We chose Krista because, like most of you, she is involved in a very difficult case. She has spent countless hours involved with the team trying to avoid placement disruptions and locating new placements when the disruptions became inevitable. She always manages to find time in her incredibly busy schedule to attend all meetings, even if she has to participate telephonically at times. She writes very thorough court reports that provide a wealth of information about the child and his needs.

The thing that stuck out to me the most, however, was her dedication at a particularly trying time in her child's life. There was a day where she spent approximately 18 hours of the day involved with the case, because a major crisis had occurred. I remember that day quite well, as I was on the phone with her several times throughout the evening while she updated me on the situation. The following day was not quite as long for her, but she was still heavily involved with the foster family, the caseworker, and other members of the team.

I'm still not entirely sure how she managed to fit this into her schedule. She is a senior program manager for General Dynamics and an adjunct professor for UA and NAU, so she spends a lot of time working. Unfortunately, because of her job, she was unable to be at

the recognition. She usually isn't able to participate in any of our get-togethers, so I wanted to make it a point to recognize her for all of her dedication to our program since 2013.



This year was very challenging. We have so many strong advocates who are going above and beyond for their assigned children, that it was difficult to select only one. I truly appreciate each of you and all the hours that you dedicate to being there for your child, advocating for your child, writing court reports, and adhering to the demands of the program. You are all amazing!

Letter to the Editor

By **Mary C. Blanchard**, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

I was delivering a baby blanket to Chris Hall because her boy is being adopted and is leaving for California the end of the month. Naturally, we sat down to visit for a moment.

In the course of our conversation, Chris happened to mention one of the articles in the September newsletter. She said she was blown away by Krista Ochs' article *Poly-victimization Among Children Requiring Therapy*. Somehow I couldn't remember the article, and then I realized that I had missed reading the newsletter this month.

I found four articles worthy of comment.

Poly-Victimization Among Children Requiring Therapy

Last night on September 10th, I read this article. Krista, you are so right. Our kids have been through so much that we fail to recognize that we cannot focus on one trauma (usually the most recent or most "serious"). We need to be aware that it is necessary to treat all the traumas of these "poly-victims" because all the traumas are affecting the child in a negative and unhealthy manner, and for treatment to be successful, it must be holistic.

This article is so dead on point, and its message is so powerful that I had to read it twice. Thank you, Krista, for raising my level of awareness.

Advocating for CASA in The Community

As I continued to read the newsletter, I realized that the newsletter really touched my core this month. Mary Jacobs, you started the ball rolling when you invited Abby to make a presentation to the City's management team about the need, the purpose, and the process of becoming a CASA. This led to Abby and Ned being guests on Simone McFarland's Friday Report, a morning talk show segment on AM 1420.

Way to go, Mary, Ned, and Abby. You shine as the voice of CASA. You'd convince me to sign up myself if I hadn't already been a CASA for 16 years.

Being A Casa Is a Vocation

This brings me to Ned's article about the difference between a career and a vocation. Ned is so positive I expect to see + signs all over him. He has earned the trust and loyalty of every kid, parent, and CASA who has ever known him. I agree with him that every CASA, by agreeing to be the advocate for a kid, is making a promise to the ideal of being there for the child as long as the case is active. Every other person on the case may leave, but the CASA is a constant. My new motto involves his double negative and his saying, "You can't not do this thing." You got it right, Ned. I am following in your footsteps.

Letter to the Editor (Continued)

Case Dismissal Brings Joy to Mother

Ned's second story about the dismissal of a case made me realize that we have to weigh the facts very carefully. In this case, the mother deserved to get her child back. She is grateful and expresses her gratitude to Ned, to the social workers, to the attorneys, to the judges and to both of the counties (Cochise and Umpqua) that were involved.

There are many cases where children need to be severed from their parents and moved to a new placement. The mother in Ned's story worked for 36 months and whatever it took, she did it and she did get her son back.

I have known Ned for many years, and I have always found him to be supportive of parents and to work to help them get back on track and get their kids back ***if the parents are willing to make the changes that are needed***. Ned is an advocate who cares for everyone but remains committed to the best interest of his child. In Ned's case, it is often more than one child and they are scattered all over Arizona.

Bless you, Ned. We love you,

Mary

Freedom

By **Mary C. Blanchard**, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

One of our regulars at the mall is in a wheel chair. He has the use of his hands and arms and greets everyone with a huge smile. He loves to visit and takes an active part in conversations in spite of having difficulty speaking clearly. When I talk to him, I have learned to chat away and respond to his efforts to speak. I point and he nods and he points and I chatter away.

Several weeks ago I saw him, and he had a badge that was displayed prominently on the tray on his wheelchair. I leaned over and read it. It was a bus pass. Since it was laminated, I realized it was permanent. I was blown away. This young man who is very physically challenged was riding our public transportation! I thought of how difficult this is for him. Then I told myself, "***So what!***" He can do it...he *is* doing it! He is going places without relying on anyone.

And, actually, our wonderful public transportation system is doing its part. The busses are handicap-accessible, and this young man is very motivated to use them. He is reclaiming a measure of his independence and, as daunting as it may be to do this, he manages to get from point A to point B. And he does this in spite of his minimal ability to communicate.

At this point, I looked the young man in the eye and did two thumbs up with vigor. He did the same. What a moment! He was grinning and I was grinning. It was a wonderful day!

Adoption Quilts

By **Mary C. Blanchard**, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Mary Kay Holcomb does a great deal of charity work. She is always thinking of new ways to help people and to bring joy into their lives. She has come up with a way to have a special gift for every newly adopted CASA kid. She is a member of the Hummingbird Stitchers Quilt Guild, and these ladies come together to make quilts. She decided it would be very nice if one of the projects for the guild would be to make and donate quilts to give to every CASA kid when he/she is adopted.

If you have a child who is about to be adopted, you can email Mary Kay and ask to be put on the list to receive a quilt. If you include general details like the age and sex of the child, and maybe even a special interest (Barbie) or color, it might be possible to customize the quilt or at least include some of the details.

Mary Kay's e-mail is Holcombamk@live.com

Three CASAs in our Thursday morning support group recently got quilts. One of the CASAs wasn't there to select her quilt, so everyone there discussed the situation (every single quilt was gorgeous) and when we reached consensus, I volunteered to deliver that quilt to her.

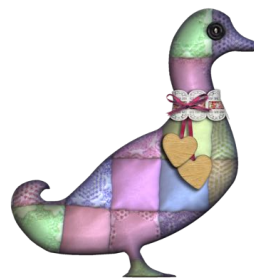
The guild provides quilts for the various community services and charities in the Sierra Vista area. They apply every year to be considered for the Humanitarian Award. To be eligible, they need to submit validations to support their consideration.

When a CASA receives a quilt, it is very important that a Thank You letter is sent to the guild. We need to validate the importance and meaning of all the countless hours of work that went into our quilt. We need to emphasize the importance of a child's being adopted. We need to stress that our child's adoption quilt is a very special memory and will be a tangible reminder of that wonderful day when our child got a **forever** home.

This letter will be included in the Hummingbird Stitchers Guild's application to be considered for the Humanitarian Award.

The address to use to send your letter is:

Hummingbird Stitchers Quilt Guild
PO Box 1326
Sierra Vista, Arizona 85636



First Job—One Month Later

By **Mary C. Blanchard**, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Last month I shared with you the ups and downs of my almost 17-year-old when she applied for her first job and her joy when she landed the one she wanted at Wendy's.

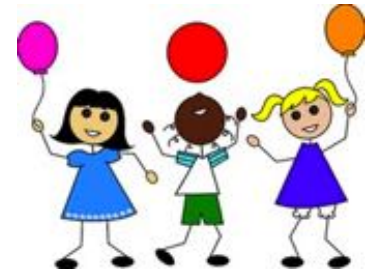
It is now one month later. My young lady positively sparkled when she described her experiences. First came money. She has gotten her first paycheck and was about to get her second. She works 20 hours a week and is overjoyed to be working. The house rules require that she must keep her grades up if she is to keep the job, so she now checks StudentVue every day. She is passing everything! She has a full schedule with academic emphasis, so she studies every spare moment.

My girl is a people person, which means she loves working with the customers. She is mastering the various stations. She is already comfortable with food prep. She is very proactive on cleanup because she doesn't have to do it often. She was scared when she had to learn the mechanics of the deep fat fryer. She conquered her fear and was comfortable with it until the manager assigned her a newer girl and told my girl to show her the "ropes." My girl protested and said she was too new to train anyone. The manager, smiled and twinkled when he told her, "You are doing it!" She felt very good about the outcome.

She has spent one shift on the registers. She loved every minute of it and was thrilled to get four positive comments from customers. She learned to co-exist with a difficult employee. The manager stepped in when he overheard this employee in action. The employee hasn't been around for awhile, so the situation seems to be resolved.

Working is good for teenagers, and my teenager is rising to the challenge with gusto.

Kudos



Bud & Jan Dragoo, Cochise County CASA Volunteers

FCRB, 8/13/2016,

The Board acknowledges the Court Appointed Special Advocate team for their diligence in ensuring S's needs are met, investing quality time with him, and for being a continued support to S.

Ned Letto, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

FCRB, 8/13/2016,

The Board acknowledges the CASA for his diligence in ensuring R, T, and N receive the necessary supports.

Anniversaries

Lynn Vanderdasson

10/10/12 – 4 years

Morrisa Berkley

10/12/15 – 1 year

Morning & Evening Support Groups

By **Mary C. Blanchard**, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

I am noticing, now that we have been meeting for a while, that everyone shares freely. We are like family now.

It was especially heartwarming to hear about adoptions. Kathy S took pictures of her girl in the judge's chair with Judge Bannon looking on. Every adoption is a forever home for one of our children. It is truly a joyous occasion.

Lynn V told us about the time she was so frustrated at a FCRB meeting that she told the board that her child was being harmed by toxic visitations, and nothing was being done about it. Lynn is very mild-mannered and is very low key, but her letting go and telling the board exactly how upset she was got results. Visitations were stopped. What impressed me about Lynn's story was the realization that she can put aside her soft side and bring a very forceful presentation when it is needed to advocate for her child.

During the evening meeting, we chatted a bit about our new secure websites. Last month, Juanita Adamson reported that her court report froze after she clicked on Edit, and I had the same experience. Sharon is about to write a court report involving multiple children. Ned Letto gave us a heads up at the morning support group that the 2nd and 3rd children vanished when he tried to save what he had written about them. Sharon says she will probably use the old template for her report.

I think one of the reasons we come to the support group is to share our concerns about our case and to learn from each other. It is a

secure setting with trusted fellow advocates, and we can ask each other for advice. It is a great opportunity to brainstorm and problem solve, and sometimes we realize that there are some problems that need further study.

During the morning meetings, Abby always has her phone out, and she can check and find out some of the policies and resources we need. It is instant clarification and is very useful. I truly look forward to support group days. I come home with new ideas and recharged energy.



Second Thursday of the Month

10:00am-12:00 noon

Home of Lynn Vanderdasson
5776 E. Penny Lane
Hereford, AZ 85615

Evening Support Group

**Last Tuesday of the Month,
7:00-9:00pm
Home of LuRue Troyer
2300 Iris Drive
Sierra Vista**

Adoption vs Guardianship

By **Mary C. Blanchard**, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Our evening support group in September opened up a topic that led to quick research on the computer...details regarding adoption, guardianship, the guidelines, the pros and cons, etc. We came to realize that these are not straightforward issues and need more clarification.

Sharon Buono has three children who are approaching permanency. She is checking out options. We discussed the pros and cons of adoption versus guardianship. Adoption is a forever home, but what about the teenage girl who is going to be heading back to Mom the minute she turns 18? For her, guardianship is probably the way to go. And the boy and girl who are under 10 need a permanent home, so adoption seems perfect for them.

With rules and policies changing all the time, what is the current status on subsidy? What are the current requirements? Is the special needs child eligible? And what about low income families? How much is the subsidy? It has been almost \$600 a month for adoptions and \$300 a month for guardianship per child.

As a case moves towards permanency, there is a lot to consider. We were not even sure of the exact benchmarks for each age when time runs out for parents. We also were unsure about how much a parent has to do to be compliant. We had to face the truth; we are a bit fuzzy about the basics. Sharon was going to check out the handbook when she got home.

Ed Note: *This topic caught the attention of our Coordinator. It prompted her to submit the selection in this month's From the Manual. A piece on Guardianship subsidy will appear next month.*

CASA Family News from Cochise County

From **Cheryl Tomlinson**

I am holding my new (first)
grandbaby.

Olivia Mikinzie Tomlinson

She was born 09/23/16 and
weighed 6 lbs. 12 oz.



Book Signing

On October 22, 2016, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., at the annex of Mountain View Assembly of God, one of our CASAs, **Juanita Adamson**, and a group of local Christian writers will be signing their newly published book, "Mountains of Grace". The book contains special writings and devotions written as a collaborative project by several women and men throughout Arizona. The book took approximately three years to complete. "Mountains of Grace" as well as their last published book, "Spirit Aflame" will be available for purchase at the book signing. E-books are also available from several electronic sources. All proceeds are donated to the Mountain View Assembly of God Women's Ministry.

The public is invited.

CASA of the Month!

Mary Blanchard

I want to recognize Mary Blanchard this month for her incredible dedication to supporting our entire program. Mary not only does a wonderful job of advocating for her assigned children, she also acts as a Co-CASA, she mentors several of our newer CASAs, and she is a regularly featured author for our monthly newsletter. What stuck out to me most this month, though, was how she has approached our change to CASAaz. Mary was worried that it would take her a long time to master this new system. However, even though she was worried about learning it, she has made herself available to her mentees should they need help with the system. **Way to go, Mary!**

If you haven't met Mary, (I don't see how that could be possible), then I highly recommend you do so. Mary is a wealth of knowledge of CASA, the dependency system, and resources available. She is an amazing support to other advocates and she's always willing to help out, even if she wasn't assigned as your mentor.

Thanks, Mary, for all of your hard work...for the kids you represent and for our program as a whole!

September 2016



Improving Foster Care

Submitted by **Allison Hurtado**, CASA Marketing & Community Outreach Specialist, AZ Supreme Court

It's often easier for those of us who volunteer with Arizona's Foster Care System to find the challenges and weaknesses of the system but, if we dig a little, we can find successful efforts at various levels of government to change the system for the benefit of the children it serves.

In 2014, the US Government passed the "preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act," the intention of which was to "assist foster parents in applying a reasonable and prudent parent standard in a manner that protects child safety, while also allowing children to experience normal and beneficial activities." For the foster child, this law eliminates the need for court orders to approve normal family/child activities such as extracurricular activities or out-of-state vacations with the foster family. It also eliminates the need to conduct criminal background checks of the parents of a child's friend before approving a "sleepover." For the first time since the bill passed, I noted an entry entitled "Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard" in one of the documents I read this week in preparation for my next Foster Care Review Board. That law allowed the child whose case we are reviewing to participate in extracurricular activities (primarily basketball and the Rocket Science club) without the inconvenience of obtaining a court order first. This makes the foster care experience just a *tad* more like a "real" family experience for the child.

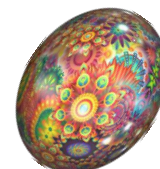
Recently, California made substantial improvements to its Foster care system. Called *Continuum of Care Reforms (CCRs)*, the bill was prepared to "make sure that youth in foster care have their day-to-day physical, mental, and emotional needs met; have the greatest chance to grow up in permanent...homes; and have the opportunity to grow into self-sufficient, successful adults." (CA AB 403.) The reforms include: providing specific training for foster families, replacing long-term foster placements with more family-like settings; and

transforming group homes into short-term, therapeutic homes to prepare children to live with foster families. In addition, efforts are being made in California to more accurately match the foster child to a foster family and to better train those foster parents, both of which will help prevent future placement changes. The CCRs also modify the rate structure for foster families and institute evaluations by youth and families of service providers.

And finally, in Arizona, several reporters for the Arizona Republic have been awarded a three-year Arizona Community Foundation grant to identify and explore problems that exist in Arizona's Foster Care system. The purpose of this grant is to "support in-depth investigative reporting about child welfare in Arizona" (www.azfoundation.org). More specific goals include: understanding why reports of child abuse are rising in Arizona (up 28% in the last three years), investigating the system itself, and finding solutions to the problems they find there.

So, as bleak as things may look at times, there have been some improvements in foster care in AZ and the US. And with some concerted effort, those of us involved with foster care can identify system weaknesses and bring them to the attention of legislators and journalists to effect important changes to reduce at least some of the stress experienced by children in care.

-- Elizabeth Jacobs, FCRB Maricopa 19



**A special birthday on October 14th!
Happy Birthday, Lissete!**

CCCC, Inc

Cochise County Council for CASA, Inc

is a nonprofit organization that raises funds to the unmet needs of abused neglected and abandoned children in the CASA of Cochise County Program. The primary focus is to ensure the educational progress of CASA children through tutoring and scholarships. In addition the council provides clothing, toys and personal items.

If your CASA child/youth has an unmet need, consider the Cochise County Council for CASA to help!!

Call your CASA Coordinator at 432-7521 OR

Send an email to Adodge@courts.az.gov



Celebrate Mystery,



MURDER, MARGARET AND ME

by Philip Meeks

"The only real truth in what you are about to see is that Miss Margaret Rutherford didn't want anyone to know the truth." Agatha Christie, Margaret Rutherford, and The Spinster meet for tea, sympathy and some challenging questions.

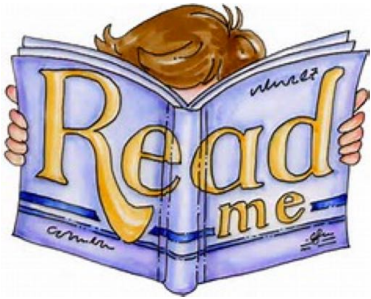
Should Margaret the comedian play Marple the detective? Why did Agatha disappear? What tragedy lurks behind these famous faces?

Directed by Carrie Mitten-Girsch

November 4, 5, 11 & 12 at 7:30 pm
November 6 & 13 at 3:00 pm

**You can find Kathy Shaughnessy's play at the
Central School Project in Bisbee.
Bisbee Obscure Productions**

OCTOBER 2016						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
→ 10/06/16 Ned: Court Report due for JM. Dragoo's: Court Report due for SB Juanita: Court Report due for twins.						1 National Homemade Cookies Day
2	3 Techies Day	4	5 Do Something Nice Day	6 Court Reports Due ↑	7 World Smile Day	8
9 Fire Prevention Day	10 Columbus Day Offices Open	11 Bekki R. 	12 COURT REPORT WRITING CLASS! Please lookout for more information!	13 SUPPORT GROUP	14 Lissete B.  National Dessert Day	15
16 Bosses Day	17	18 No Beard Day	19	20 Mary B: Court Report due for V/S Case. Lynn: Court Report due KW.	21	22 Make a Difference Day
23	24	25 SUPPORT GROUP	26	27 Navy Day	28	29 Hermit Day
30	31 	Morriisa: Court Report due for BM.				



Arizona Adoption Subsidy

FROM THE MAGAZINE

The Adoption Subsidy Program provides post adoption support for children with special needs who are adopted from foster care. The adoption subsidy program supports the department's efforts to provide permanent adoptive placements for children who cannot be cared for by their birth parents to ensure that no foster child is considered unadoptable solely because of his or her special needs.

Eligibility

A child is eligible for adoption subsidy if he or she:

- is in the care and custody of the department or of a licensed private child placing agency in Arizona;
- the child cannot or should not be returned to the care of the birth parents;
- a reasonable, but unsuccessful, effort has been made to place the child with appropriate parents without providing adoption assistance unless it would not be in the best interest of the child because of such factors as the existence of significant emotional ties with prospective adoptive parents while their care as a foster child;
- the State has determined that one of the following special needs exists because of which it is reasonable to conclude the child cannot be

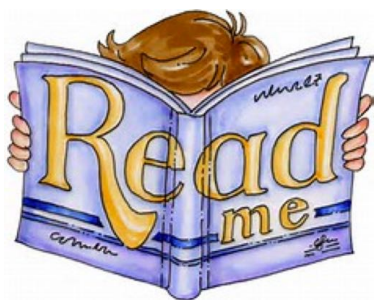
placed with adoptive parents without providing adoption assistance:

- physical, mental or developmental disability;
- emotional disturbance;
- high risk of physical or mental disease that may result in a debilitating condition;
- high risk of developmental disability that may result in a debilitating condition;
- age six or older at the time of application for adoption subsidy;
- sibling relationship when such factor impedes the child's adoptive placement;
- racial or ethnic factors when such factor(s) impede the child's adoptive placement;
- high risk of severe emotional disturbance if removed from the care of the child's foster parent or relative as diagnosed by a psychiatrist or psychologist.

How long does the subsidy last?

The adoption subsidy will continue until the child's 18th birthday if the adoptive parents remain legally and financially responsible for the child. The adoption subsidy may continue through the age of 21 if the child is residing with the adoptive parent and is continuously enrolled in and regularly attending school, unless the child has received a high school diploma or certificate of equivalency (GED).

Continued on next page~



Arizona Adoption Subsidy (Continued)

FROM THE MAGAZINE

The adoption subsidy may be terminated if the Adoption Subsidy Program determines the adoptive parents are no longer legally responsible for the support of the child including if the child joins the military or marries or the adoptive parents are no longer providing support to the child.

If something happens to me, does the adoption subsidy transfer to my child's caregiver?

No. The subsidy will end if you are no longer able to care for your child. If a subsequent caregiver adopts, the child will likely continue to be eligible for adoption subsidy under a new agreement with that adoptive parent.

The adoptive parents are responsible for reporting changes immediately to Adoption Subsidy. This includes if the child: has a change of address or no longer resides with the adoptive parents; receives monetary benefits or there is a change in benefits; is no longer attending school or if the child or parent dies.

Types of Subsidy

The department may provide one or more of the following types of adoption subsidy for the eligible child, as determined by the needs of the child:

- medical/dental/mental health care through Title

XIX eligibility;

- maintenance payments;
- special services subsidy; and
- reimbursement of nonrecurring adoption expenses.

Health Care

Almost all adoption subsidy children receive medical, dental and mental health coverage through the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) or Medicaid. (Contact the Adoption Subsidy Program for information about exceptions.).

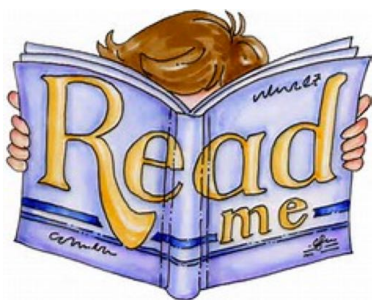
Medical and dental care is provided in the community through a number of different AHCCCS/Medicaid health plans and providers. In Arizona, mental health care is provided through the Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (RBHA) and their providers contracted through the Department of Health Services.

DES notifies AHCCCS of the child's eligibility when the final order of adoption is received. AHCCCS then notifies the adoptive parent to choose a health plan.

When does CMDP end and AHCCCS begin?

CMDP ends on the date of the adoption and AHCCCS coverage begins. However, it takes a couple of weeks for AHCCCS to process the change and notify the parents of the new AHCCCS health plan. It is important that medications be refilled prior to the adoption and that routine medical and dental appointments not be scheduled for a few

Continued on next page~



Arizona Adoption Subsidy (Continued)

FROM THE MAGAZINE

weeks after the adoption. Emergencies are covered but it may take additional clarification.

Does our income count toward AHCCCS eligibility?

If the child is eligible for adoption subsidy, then the child is categorically eligible for AHCCCS and therefore the family's income is not considered.

Do the adoptive parents have to provide private insurance for the child?

No, however if the parents have private insurance that can cover the child it is the expectation that they will add the child unless it is cost prohibitive. AHCCCS/Medicaid will then be secondary coverage.

Who covers co-pays if the child is covered by private insurance?

It is the responsibility of AHCCCS/Medicaid to coordinate benefits that may include the cost of co-pays.

Can I use my own doctor?

You will choose the AHCCCS plan for your child and then use the physicians, providers, and facilities of that plan.

Maintenance Subsidy

Maintenance subsidy is a regular monthly payment provided to the adoptive parent to assist with the extra

time, care and expense required to care for an adopted child with special needs. The amount of the subsidy payment varies and is based on the severity of the special needs of the child and the time, care and expense involved in meeting the child's needs. The maintenance payment is intended to assist the family so that they are able to adopt and care for a child with special needs but it is not expected to cover all the daily living expenses. Maintenance subsidy rates are negotiated with the adoptive family based on the needs of the child and generally mirror the foster care rate the child receives or for which they qualify. *The maximum amount can be no more than the amount that would have been paid to a family foster home.*

Will the maintenance subsidy cover all of the costs of the child's care?

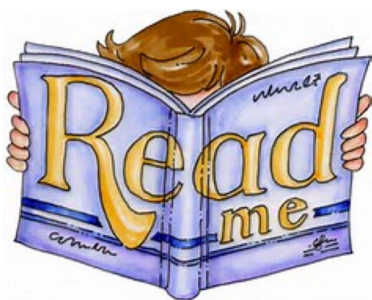
No. The adoptive parents are responsible for the child's living expenses. The maintenance payment is intended to assist with the extra expenses involved in caring for a child with special needs.

Do all Adoption Subsidy children receive a maintenance payment?

No. Not all adoption subsidy children are eligible for adoption subsidy maintenance. The maintenance is based on the special needs of the child and circumstances of the family.

For example, a young child who is determined eligible for Adoption

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Arizona Adoption Subsidy (Continued)

FROM THE MAGAZINE

Subsidy based on his high risk of disabilities may not have any current needs beyond those normally expected for any child. This child may not receive adoption subsidy maintenance.

Why do some children receive higher rates than others?

Adoption Subsidy maintenance amount is based on the specific special needs of each child and the extra time, care, supervision and expense needed to meet the child's special needs. *The child cannot receive a rate higher than the amount that would have been paid if the child was in a family foster home.*

Why doesn't Adoption Subsidy pay the higher rates received by therapeutic (HCTC) and Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) child developmental homes?

These homes are paid to provide professional care for the child in addition to the foster care rate. When the caregiver decides to adopt, the role changes from professional provider to adoptive parent. Adoption Subsidy maintenance is provided to assist the adoptive family with the costs of caring for a special needs child not to replace the income for providing professional care.

The caregiver is now the parent and the child is eligible to receive therapeutic or habilitation services from other providers.

Will Adoption Subsidy subtract other benefits such as Social Security (SSA) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

Adoption Subsidy subtracts some benefits such as SSA death or disability benefits. SSI is not subtracted but the adoptive parent must report the receipt of adoption subsidy maintenance to Social Security and frequently the child will no longer qualify for SSI after the adoption.

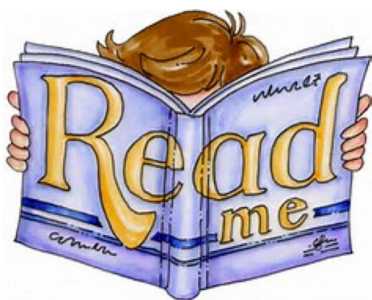
Will receipt of Adoption Subsidy affect other benefits such as TANF, food stamps, WIC or school lunch?

Yes, other benefits may be affected. The adoptive parent must report the receipt of Adoption Subsidy maintenance payments to the benefit offices such as Family Assistance, Social Security or the school. The benefits may be reduced depending on the family's income including adoption subsidy. The adoptive parent must report to Adoption Subsidy any other benefits the child receives.

Will the child's maintenance payment ever change?

The initial rate is based on the child's needs at the time of application and may or may not be the same as the rate being received in foster care. If the needs of the child change or other benefits received for the child change the subsidy maintenance amount may be renegotiated.

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Arizona Adoption Subsidy (Continued)

FROM THE MAGAZINE

If maintenance is approved, what is required and when is it received?

If the child is approved for maintenance, the check is sent monthly to the adoptive parent between the 1st and 15th of the month. No additional paperwork is required from the adoptive parent.

Is my adoption subsidy maintenance taxable?

The state does not issue an IRS 1099 for adoption subsidy maintenance. Since each person's taxes are specific to their situation, Adoption Subsidy cannot give tax advice. Please refer your tax questions to the IRS or a tax accountant.

Special Services Subsidy

Special services subsidy is provided for extraordinary, infrequent or uncommon needs related to the pre-existing special needs conditions of the child on the Adoption Subsidy agreement that cannot be met by AHCCCS/Medicaid, RBHA, school or other public or private resources. *All special services must be authorized by the Adoption Subsidy program prior to receipt of the service.*

The adoptive family must exhaust all other resources, including private insurance, Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS)/Medicaid, Regional

Behavioral Health Authorities (RBHAs), Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS) and the public school district services before applying to the Adoption Subsidy Program for special services payment. The family is expected to participate to the extent possible in providing special services.

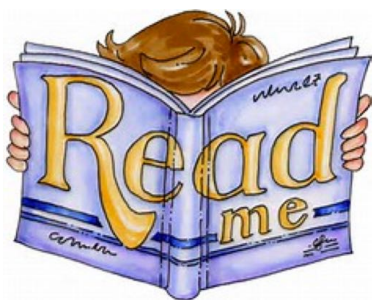
Special services must be:

- Related to a special needs condition listed on the adoption subsidy agreement;
- Necessary to improve or maintain the adopted child's functioning as documented by an appropriate qualified professional;
- Provided by a qualified professional approved by the Department;
- Provided in the least restrictive environment and as close as possible to the family's residence;
- In accordance with the "Standard of Care";
- Not otherwise covered by or provided through maintenance subsidy, medical, dental or mental health subsidy, or other resources for which the adopted child is eligible.

Special services subsidy **do not include:**

- Payment for services to meet needs other than the pre-existing special needs conditions specifically listed in the adoption subsidy agreement;

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Arizona Adoption Subsidy (Continued)

FROM THE MAGAZINE

- Payment for medical or dental services usually considered to be routine, such as well-child checkups, immunizations, and other services not related to the child's special needs conditions on the adoption subsidy agreement;
- Payment for health-related services that are not medically necessary, as determined by a health service professional;
- Payment for social or recreational services such as childcare, dance lessons, sports fees, camps, and similar services;
- Payment for personal or clothing allowance;
- Payment for educational services that is not necessary to meet the special needs conditions specifically listed in the adoption subsidy agreement, or the services for which the school district is responsible.

If a special service is authorized, will there be a cost to the parent?

There may be. Adoption Subsidy pays for approved services at rates established by AHCCCS, DES, DDD and Adoption Subsidy. The provider may charge the full cost of the service. Adoption Subsidy will only pay at the

government established rate (minus any insurance payment). The adoptive parent is responsible for any difference.

What services can my child receive from Adoption Subsidy?

There is not a list of services that a child can receive. The services for each child are based on that child's pre-existing conditions on the Adoption Subsidy agreement and the other resources that are available to the child. If there are no conditions on a child's agreement then no services are available.

Does Adoption Subsidy pay for day care?

No. Adoption Subsidy does not pay for the costs of day care. CPS day care ends when the adoption is final.

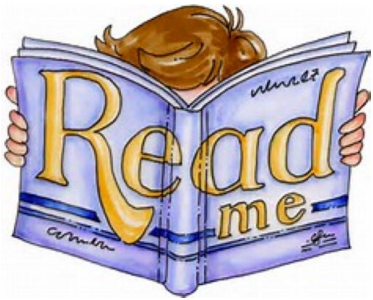
Does Adoption Subsidy pay for respite?

Respite is a special service and the need for services must be related to each child's conditions on the individual's adoption subsidy agreement. Approval for services including respite are based on the child's needs and must first be exhausted from private and public health coverage and other community resources. Respite from other resources must be used or denied prior to receiving respite from Adoption Subsidy. If respite services are determined necessary, the services must be prior authorized by Adoption Subsidy.

Does Adoption Subsidy pay for college?

No. There are no adoption subsidy funds to assist with college.

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Arizona Adoption Subsidy (Continued)

FROM THE MAGAZINE

Adoption Subsidy ends once the youth is 18 years old and graduates from high school or receives a GED. If the youth was adopted after age 16, he/she may be eligible to receive assistance through the Education and Training voucher (ETV). Applicants may access the application at www.statevoucher.org and click on Arizona.

Non-recurring Adoption Expenses

Reimbursement of nonrecurring adoption expenses is a one-time reimbursement, up to \$2,000 per child, for reasonable and necessary expenses such as adoption fees, court costs, attorney fees, and expenses directly related to the legal process of adopting a child with special needs.

Only actual expenses are reimbursed and the request for payment must be received within 9 months of the date the adoption is final.

What expenses are not reimbursable?

Family counseling, pre-placement visitation, remodeling or alteration of the adoptive parent's home and any other expenses not related to the legal process of the adoption are not reimbursable.

Application Process

There are a number of forms and documents required to

determine eligibility. The adoption worker will assist the parent with the application. The adoption worker completes some of the forms and assists the adoptive parents in completing the others. Professional documentation of the child's pre-existing conditions must be attached to the application. The documentation must be completed by a professional who has expertise in the area of the diagnosis.

All applications, regardless of which agency placed the child, are submitted to the DES Adoption Subsidy Program and are reviewed by the Adoption Subsidy Review Committee (ASRC) to determine eligibility. The adoption subsidy agreement must be signed by the adoptive parents and the adoption subsidy supervisor before the adoption is final.

When do I apply for subsidy?

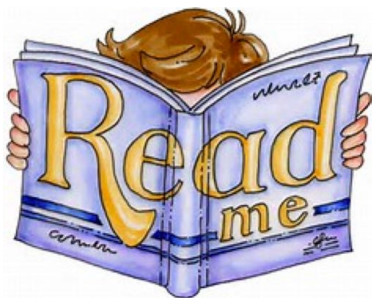
Parents adopting a special needs child should submit their application about the time they file the petition to adopt and at least 60 days before the final adoption hearing.

The Adoption Subsidy agreement must be negotiated before the adoption is final. *The agreement must be signed by the adoptive parent and the Adoption Subsidy supervisor before the adoption is final.*

When does the subsidy begin?

Adoption subsidy maintenance payments may begin after the

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Arizona Adoption Subsidy (Continued)

FROM THE MAGAZINE

adoption subsidy agreement has been signed by the adoptive parents and the Adoption Subsidy supervisor and the petition to adopt has been filed.

Health coverage (AHCCCS/Medicaid) and Special Services that have been authorized may begin when the adoption is final.

Non-recurring adoption expenses are reimbursed after the bills have been submitted. The bills must be submitted within 9 months of the date the adoption is final.

Adoption Subsidy for a child who lives outside of Arizona

To protect the interests of adoption subsidy children who move or are placed across state lines, the department follows all rules and procedures required by the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA).

The adoption subsidy agreement remains in effect regardless of the state of residence of the child and adoptive parents.

Adoption subsidy maintenance payments are provided to adoptive parents living outside of Arizona in the same manner as those residing in Arizona.

Children who have Title IVE adoption subsidy agreements are eligible for Medicaid health coverage in their state of residence. Children who have state adoption subsidy agreements (not Title IVE eligible) are eligible for Medicaid health coverage if they reside outside Arizona in a reciprocating state. (Contact the Adoption Subsidy Program for information about non-reciprocating states [HI, IL, NH, NM, NV].)

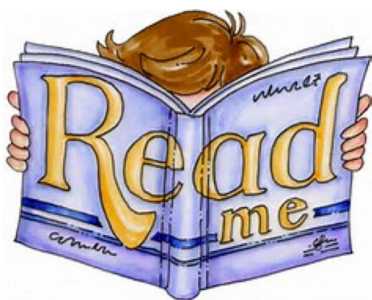
The adoptive parents must request and be approved for special services subsidy for necessary services prior to the receipt of the services.

The need for special services must be related to the pre-existing special needs conditions on the adoption subsidy agreement.

Adoptive parents who move from Arizona or move between places outside Arizona must notify their Adoption Subsidy worker immediately. Adoption subsidy must complete the paperwork to transfer the Medicaid coverage.

Annual Review

The adoptive parent is sent an Adoption Subsidy Annual Review form. The parent must complete and return the review form to the Adoption Subsidy program within 30 days. Information on the annual review is used to confirm that the child is still in the care and custody of the adoptive parents and provide an update on the child.



Arizona Adoption Subsidy (Continued)

FROM THE MAGAZINE

Case Management

Adoption Subsidy case managers are appointed for all approved children. Families are notified of the case manager's name, address, email and telephone number. Case management services are directed at supporting the integration and stability of the child within the adoptive family.

If requested by the adoptive parents, the adoption subsidy case manager may provide the following services: assistance in locating and obtaining services through community resources; assistance with requests for special services; information about payments and service authorizations and assistance in completing annual reviews.

What is the difference between Foster Care and Adoption Subsidy?

The primary difference is that the child is no longer in the custody of DES or an agency.

The child is now in the custody of the adoptive parent who is now responsible and will make decisions about the child. An Adoption Subsidy case manager will be assigned, but s/he will not make home visits or contact the adoptive family unless the parent requests

assistance. The adoptive parent is encouraged to contact the case manager with any questions or concerns.

Appeals

An applicant may appeal the department's decision to deny, reduce or terminate adoption subsidy. A request for an appeal must be made to Adoption Subsidy in writing no later than 15 calendar days from the postmark of the written notice of the action. The request for appeal shall specify the action being appealed, the reasons for the appeal, and a brief summary of why the department's action was erroneous, unlawful or improper.

The DCYF Adoption Subsidy Program Specialist or Adoption Subsidy Supervisor will coordinate appeals in accordance with the requirements of Arizona Administrative Code Title 6, Chapter 5, Article 24, Appeals and Hearings.

Tax Credit

A federal income tax credit may be available if you adopt a special needs child. Consult a tax professional or the Internal Revenue Service for more information.

CASA Recognition Banquet

By Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer & Abby Dodge, Cochise County Coordinator

It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces at the banquet and to have a chance to catch up with old friends. The food was plentiful and delicious, so much so that my bathroom scales had a stern conversation with me about moderation.

There were several distinguished guests at the banquet. The Honorable James Conlogue, Presiding Judge, and the Honorable Terry Bannon, Division VI, were both in attendance from the Cochise County Superior Court. Pamela Housh, the Division Director of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Program, attended from Court Administration. Sharon Travis, Assistant Program Manager, represented the Department of Child Safety. Finally, Anita and Kevin Farrow and Suzanne De Rosier attended from the Cochise County Council for CASA, Inc.

The CASA of the Year is Krista Ochs. Her current case has very serious issues, and one day during a crisis, she spent eighteen hours working on her case. Krista has a very full plate with her job, her work as an adjunct professor at both U of A and NAU, and her family; there is not much time left for anything else. Krista told Abby that she is a



“rogue” CASA because she never comes to any of our activities. Krista, I want to go on record as saying we need more “rogue” CASAs like you. You are the ultimate advocate.

It was so thoughtful of Lissete and Abby to give every single CASA a metal basket filled with goodies. There was a wide assortment of treats, and more than a few of us were busy trading to get our special favorite candy.





Judge Bannon thanked all the CASAs who give so many hours of dedicated service to advocate for children. It was a moving tribute, and she shed a few tears, which she explained was something she does when she is deeply moved. She called up our three new CASA volunteers, Chris Hall, Deb Scott, and Sharon Buono, to officially swear them in. Proud husbands stood up and took pictures.



At the very end of the banquet, Lynn Vanderdasson went up on stage and thanked Lissette and Abby for their vision and leadership, their unwavering support when a CASA needs help, and their dedication to CASA. She thanked them for inspiring every CASA volunteer to do everything possible to advocate for kids. She spoke for every CASA in the room when she thanked them both for making the CASA program what is today.

